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ABSTRACT

Photocopy humor is defined as any facsimile, photocopy, or wire-copy line drawing, iconography, or textual material that was drawn or written for distribution to a larger select audience using the available technology to disperse material intended to be humorous. Professional humor is excluded from this consideration. The content of photocopy humor gives insight into the individuals who create and share it and into the society that inspires it. Photocopy humor usually narrows in on stereotypical aspects of subjects, such as ethnic heritage, gender, age, and socioeconomic status, as a sample of 355 examples of photocopy humor confirms. The prevalence of photocopy humor indicates that it is indeed a form of mass media, one that merits further research. Implications of research to date are that education is the key to debunking the stereotypes and myths that are common commodities in photocopy humor. Four exhibits present examples of photocopy humor. (Contains 25 references.) (SLD)

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Decoding Photocopy Humor

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Decoding Photocopy Humor

Dan Kerns

Images and interpretations may have a life of their own long after we have forgotten how they originated.
Robert McCormick Adams, *Smithsonian* 1991

INTRODUCTION

In examining effects of media, one area has been overlooked by researchers. This area is older than the more studied medium of television and potentially has the same kind of effects on the viewers and consumers of the medium in relationship to formulating and reinforcing stereotypes. Photocopy humor is the medium of which I speak. The following paper will discuss in detail the reasons for researching this as a scholarly topic. The potentially, negative and damaging effects caused by viewing the message and the hidden, imbedded meaning contained in the visuals and textual material will be examined. Additionally, generalizations will be drawn to other forms of media, implications for education, direction for future research and some concluding remarks.

Definition of Photocopy Humor

For the purposes of this research, photocopy humor is defined as any facsimile, photocopy and wire copy line drawings, iconography and textual material which was drawn or written for distribution to a larger select audience using the available technology of the period to disperse material intended for humor. The use of the term photocopy humor intentionally excludes professionally produced cartoon and humor books and materials. Although some items included contain elements which were at one point professionally produced, they have since been altered significantly.

On first glance photocopy humor may seem to be somewhat trivial in nature, a less weighty topic of research. But just as cave drawings are researched to discover more about ancient man, the content of photocopy humor gives insight into the individuals who create, share, distribute and perpetuate the use of technology in the pursuit of folly and/or social commentary. The ills of society, prevailing attitudes and topics for discussion are present in the simple line drawings or phraseology.

The paper will discuss the potential effects photocopy humor could have on the viewing audience's development of stereotypes. The content of photocopy humor narrows in on stereotypical aspects of subjects such as ethnic heritage, gender, age and socio-economic status to name a few.

Generations are dealing with the "value programming" which occurred as a

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result of being exposed to the media. The term "value programming" comes from Morris Massey's film *What You Are Is Where You Were When* (Massey, 1975). From the first glance at the world around us at infancy, individuals begin the process of obtaining values. Massey contends these values are "programmed" into individuals by sources such as the media, our family, friends, the church and school one attends and so forth. We are shaped by our experiences, which shape our outlook and values. He postulates that these values become "locked in" around the age of 21 and from that point forward we are a reflection of our value programming. As adults, throughout our lives, we are value relating to society based on the values programmed into each of us before we reached the age of 21(Massey, 1975).

As humans, we tend to seek out and attend to images and messages which are congruent with our beliefs, values and attitudes. We define what is "right" and "wrong", "good" and "bad" "normal" and "not normal" and so forth based on our value programming. This value system is what we use to filter the events and people who come into and out of our realm of experience. All have their own value system under which they operate. What one individual deems "normal" and "good," others may find objectionable. This is particularly true in a free society such as the US where individual thought and expression is constitutionally protected.

Free speech and communication of thoughts and ideas have generated controversy as to the acceptability of certain messages. Regardless of the medium, print, broadcast or lecture; all have had fringe topics which raise the question of acceptability or the appropriateness of the communication activity. Purveyors of messages considered to be in poor taste or even pornographic contend it is their right to use the medium to express their opinions and thoughts as they see fit.

Photocopy humor is no exception. Just as home videos range from Disney cartoons to triple X-rated, so does photocopy humor. Some of the content in photocopy humor could be classified as cartoon pornography. Given this fact, we shouldn't ignore the study of photocopy humor because some of the material is unpleasant, objectionable and personally distasteful to view. Nor should objectionable material be excluded from study on the grounds that it is objectionable. Indeed, some of the examples cited in this study could be considered in very poor taste, but it is necessary to include these items to accurately define State A—what is.

Many parallels can be drawn between photocopy humor and research conducted on ethnically and sexually based humor in that photocopy humor often draws upon these two topics for subject matter. Both subject matters are often found to be controversial and in poor taste. But who defines poor taste. Ted Danson, former star of *Cheers* has found not all are amused with racial slurs. In a October 8, 1993 Friars Club roast of Whoopi Goldberg, Danson came out in black face and uttered a racial slur over a dozen times. Goldberg, who is black, didn't find the material objectionable. "I don't care if you don't like it. I do," Goldberg stated (Peoria Journal Star, October 9, 1993). It has been reported that many who attended the roast were offended, including New York Mayor David Dinkins and talk show host Montel Williams. This example illustrates the problem in defining acceptability of the content of a message. Personal standards vary widely between individuals of like and unlike demographics.

The intent of this research isn't to define what is "good" or "bad", "acceptable" or "unacceptable," but rather to establish the framework to examine the potential effects of the messages contained within photocopy humor. Further, the content of the photocopy humor examples collected and used in this paper does not reflect the beliefs, values or attitudes of the author. The collection of examples are an attempt to reflect what is being circulated.

Overview

Recently in the U.S., there has been a tendency to become more sensitive to ethnic and sexually based humor. Many of the nation's general interest publications (*Newsweek, Time, USA Today*) as well as leading women's publications (*Glamour, Mademoiselle*) have reported on various aspects of ethnic humor, both pro and con.

The attitude toward ethnic and sexual humor, a mainstay of content for photocopy humor, runs the gamut from crude, demeaning, hateful, juvenile, vicious, mean spirited, to harmless, funny, good-natured, exaggerations of life. A prevailing attitude in the literature suggests that those who can't find it within themselves to laugh are too uptight, too sensitive and can't take a joke.

Clark McCauley is one who believes that there's nothing funny about sexist humor. "Humor is particularly devastating because the hostility is disguised (Glamour, August, 1988). Susan Schneider, editor of *Lilith* magazine, commenting on Jewish-American Princess jokes stated, "It's become a socially acceptable outlet for anti-Semitic feelings" (Bruning, 1987).

On the other side of the argument, others embrace ethnic jokes. "...I think that's (a reference to Jewish joke) pretty funny. And I'm sorry, I just can't find enough high-mindedness within me to wish that this sort of joke didn't exist." (New Republic, 1987) In fact in the same article printed an etiquette guideline for telling ethnic jokes (New Republic, 1987).

One author felt we worried too much over things that aren't really important. "Much of the yelping at the media seems deeply trivial. A New York coven of witches complained when ABC televised *Rosemary's Baby*...and UFO enthusiasts groused when a woman was raped by a space alien on *Fernwood 2 Night*. Their point was that aliens do not go around raping people, and indeed there is little evidence that they do" (Lee, 1984).

Ethnic humor which was addressed in these publications focused more on the verbal joke format. Nothing has been written about photocopy humor. Ethnic and sexual humor could be thought of as a subset or specific type of photocopy humor thereby drawing upon the body of research which exists. The problem with lumping photocopy humor into the same category as verbal jokes is the longevity of the medium and the impact of the visual. A verbal joke, unless captured on recording devise, is absorbed into the ether—or locked away in the recesses of someone's mind. However with photocopy humor, there is a permanent visual record of its existence. Robert Heinich, et. al. stated that people are visually oriented and that they "...learn about 10 percent from listening, but over 80 percent from what they see (Heinich, et. al, 1989)." This statistic isn't surprising to teachers who design lectures, but given the context of photocopy humor and the content of such, the implications are alarming. Individuals could be "learning" stereotypes quite effectively from viewing photocopy humor.

In addition to sexual and ethnic based content, photocopy humor also lampoons old age. Images of befuddled and forgetful elderly are depicted. Older males are presented as sexually impotent and females are represented as having sagging body parts. Nationally, more and more groups are protesting the portrayal of elder Americans in the media. Frito-Lay has come under fire for a 1993 advertisement which shows comedian Chevy Chase rescuing a bag of Doritos from a elderly lady just before she gets steam-rolled under (Peoria Journal Star, October 6, 1993).

A greater understanding of how individuals perceive a message and what effect that message has on the viewer can be gained through the study of photocopy humor. This paper will examine photocopy humor in the context of social learning theory, cognitive dissonance theory and mass communication theory. The application of this research is of importance to parents, educators, administrators and instructional technologists. Photocopy humor is prevalent in today's society and could be used as a microcosm of human communication patterns. Additionally, the majority of the message is communicated through the use of visuals and could have implications reaching into the visual communication /visual literacy disciplines. Although photocopy humor is an informal communication pattern, similar elements (exaggerated drawings and characters) are used to communicate messages in textbooks, filmstrips, posters and displays. By examining this specific area of communication (primarily visual) one can draw inferences and generalities to other areas of communication (primarily visual). In essence, a model is created which can be used to apply theories to other areas of communication, both formal and informal, intentionally and unintentionally educational.

It is important to do a textual analysis of a representative sampling of photocopy humor to identify what types of messages are being sent. The message needs to be analyzed and categorized prior to any application of theories. Additionally, the basic assumptions made need to be detailed and validated. Further sampling of photocopy humor needs to be done and documented as to origin of collection, i.e., work environment (factory, professional, etc.) and demographic data (social-economic group, age, race).

The implications of photocopy humor are great in relationship to how individuals are value programmed to relate to another race or sex. Additionally, an individual's self-worth can be negatively impacted. The theory of self-fulfilling prophecy and Bandura's self-efficacy theory suggests the message could be impacting on the consumer. Both theories basically state similar principles of self-worth. Self-fulfilling prophecy states we will become or live up to others' reinforced expectations of us. Self-efficacy is what we believe to be true about ourselves and our capabilities to perform or achieve. Both theories have positive and negative implications. For example if a teacher continually told a student that he/she was dumb, eventually that student would believe this to be true and would stop trying to better his or her self. In this example the student would be "living up to" the expectation of the teacher. Further this student would have a low self-efficacy. Conversely, if a teacher or parent positively reinforced a child's behavior and told the child that he/she will be successful and could learn, the student would have a positive self-efficacy and would tend to fulfill that expectation.

The need for research has been established above which relates to and under-

pins the developing study of photocopy humor. What follows is an outline of the framework for the intended research.

A framework and problem definition for future research can easily be postulated to answer the following questions: Is photocopy humor a mass communication channel? What is the content of photocopy humor and how can it be classified? What are the social ramifications of the content (i.e., are viewers "learning" social/cultural biases from content?"). What effect does photocopy humor have on viewers?

Hypothesis one: Photocopy humor is a mass communication medium, bearing all the necessary principles and components of a mass communication medium.

Sub hypothesis: Photocopy humor extends to all social-economic and racial classes.

Hypothesis two: *Social and cultural biases are learned and reinforced through the repeated exposure to the content of photocopy humor.*

Assumptions about photocopy humor:

1. Photocopy humor is a mass-medium, therefore mass communication theories are appropriate to apply to photocopy humor.

2. Social Cognitive Theory is valid and applicable to photocopy humor.

3. Cognitive consistency theories, specifically Festinger's Cognitive Dissonance theory is applicable.

Overview of Collection

A sample of 355 examples of photocopy humor was coded by trained coders based on iconography and/or textual information. Preliminary work with coders resulted in the following breakout of the limited sample. The number one category for the number of items was sexual—general with 52 items. This category contained items of a sexual nature that could not be identified with one sex or the other. The combined total for all of the sexual categories was 97; over 32 percent of the total items collected were about sex or sexual topics. The number two category which was workplace—general which had 45 items for almost 13 percent. Ethnic examples numbered 33 items accounting for 11 percent.

The content of photocopy humor is dominated by ethnic and sexual humor and therefore it will be examined first. Nothing has been written specifically about photocopy humor, however generalizations can be drawn from research conducted about both ethnic and sexual humor and applied to photocopy humor. Additionally research conducted concerning stereotyping will be included.

It is interesting to note how the photocopy humor reflects the events of the time in which the item was created. For example, all items in the political categories reflect in subject matter what was occurring politically. There are crude, sexually explicit drawings representing the presidential race between George Bush and Michael DuKakis. Iraq and Desert Storm are represented (**Exhibit4**), likewise specimens from the Iran Hostage ordeal. Although the coders placed the later two items into political categories, the messages contained stereotypical traits of Iraqis and Iranians.

A drawback to the coding process is the age of the coders. College age students were used, therefore their placement of materials into categories reflects their generational view. The coding process needs to be re-done with a diverse population demographically to enhance coder reliability and validity.

DISCUSSION OF ASSUMPTION 1

Mass Communication Theory

It was earlier stated that photocopy humor is a form of mass communication, which is defined as a message communicated through a mass medium to a large audience. It is necessary to identify the characteristics which indeed make that statement true. There are four elements needed for a mass communication medium to exist: a mass medium technology, a message, an audience and a distribution network. First, the technology for this medium has been updated through the years and has progressed in sophistication. The wire copy machines of old and the facsimile machine and photocopiers of late serve as our medium for this mass communication endeavor. Second, there needs to be a message to communicate. The line drawings and textual information are what people want to communicate to others, therefore a message. Third, it is distributed to a large audience. Fourth, the distribution network is compiled of humans—those individuals who use the available technology to copy and distribute the information.

With the basic criteria to define a mass media met, an examination into the other shared commonalties of mass communication follows. Generally speaking, we can identify several characteristics of the process using the various mass communication models available. Many of the common elements found in the models include items such as regulators, audiences, effects, filters and noise. An examination of the HUB communication model will be used as an example of a testing mechanism for photocopy humor as a mass medium.

HUB Model of Mass Communication

The HUB Model of Mass Communication (Hiebert, Ungurait, Bohn, 1988) contains the following elements: Communicators, Codes, Gatekeepers, Mass Media, Regulators, Filters, Audiences and Effects. This model will be used to discuss photocopy humor as it relates to the various components.

Audience

The audience or receivers of the information were selected carefully by those who perpetuate the message. Because of biases, conflicts, perceptions and so forth, senders tend to share the message with only those who they feel would be receptive to the message. Senders learn who "is" and who "isn't" receptive and use that interpretation for future distribution. So in a sense, this is a very interpersonal mass medium. Just as people select what they communicate to whom, in an interpersonal communication context, the same is true of photocopy humor. Further, senders aren't physically and emotionally detached from the receivers which is generally true of traditional mass media.

Younger audience members are still developing their value system and can be influenced by photocopy humor's content. They are deciding what they will accept or reject as a part of their value system. The individuals are being impacted by the various media in many ways of which they, the consumers, are unaware. Examples will follow to support this assertion.

Effects

The effects of the medium can be viewed in terms of the impact on society and the impact on the individual (Hiebert, Ungurait, Bohn, 1988). The impact on society and individuals is an area which needs to be examined further, as the examples show a correlation between content and attitudes. The controversial content may

tend to perpetuate stereotypes and misperceptions. The impact on individuals is more identifiable on the surface, in that the reaction of the receiver can generally be determined through nonverbal as well as verbal feedback. But underlying messages may be imbedded in the "harmless fun" and cause undesirable effects in the audience. Specific examples follow which will show how both individual as well as societal changes result from viewing photocopy humor.

Stereotypes

At the heart of photocopy humor is stereotyping. A great deal of the content appeals to the lowest common denominator and must do so in order for the audience to find the content humorous. In order for one to process the importance of analyzing the meaning of humor, it is necessary to examine how jokes work, theoretically. Therefore a quick overview of Victor Raskin's Script-based Semantic Theory (1985) is necessary. Basically a script is a collection of words, usually a sentence, which forms meaning in the minds of the receiver based on the combined meaning of the words.

Audiences of jokes assign certain meaning to scripts. Most humor contains two or three scripts. The first script sets up a premise and the last script (either the second or third depending on the humor), often called the punch line, switches the listener to a different, conflicting or contradicting premise. However, the scripts must be in the person's frame of reference or they must be quick learners to identify the implied connection for the joke to be humorous. When some people "don't get the joke," it is because the script isn't in their frame of reference and they cannot make the implied connection.

The following is an example of how scripting occurs using a joke from Rodney Dangerfield:

Script 1

I just flew in from Vegas.

This script typically leads the audience to analyze each word and assign meaning. Most would assume figuratively that *flew* = airplane.

Script 2

Boy are my arms tired.

This script contradicts the first in a literal sense in that *I* = flew, and thereby creating the humor. In analyzing scripts that deal with sexual or ethnic humor one would quickly see the humor often is created by playing off of a stereotype.

Script 1

How do you tickle a Jewish American Princess?

This script gives the audience a framework for analyzing the question, i.e.., an ethnic group. After assigning meaning to each word, the audience determines the key element is tickle.

Script 2

Gucci, Gucci, goo!

This script has a different meaning inherent in the play on words. Oftentimes when one tickles another, the act is accompanied by goochy goochy, goo. This is probably in everyone's frame of reference. But by using the word Gucci, a well-known fashion designer, there is an added or implied meaning. To extrapolate the implied meaning in the second script, one needs to examine the first script again to find the implied connection. When examining the first script, the only connection can be with a Jewish

American Princess. Thus, the stereotyped image of a rich individual is perpetuated. For the joke to be humorous, one needs to make the connection of script 2 and the stereotype. Therefore the stereotyped image either is in the person's frame of reference (previously learned) or is taught through the joke (vicariously learned). Once a stereotype is learned it is difficult to unlearn. A continual perpetuation of an image has begun.

A recent study conducted by the National Opinion Research Center found stereotypes die hard (Newsweek, 1991).

> [The survey found]... that three quarters of the respondents say blacks are more likely than whites to "prefer to live off welfare." A majority believes that blacks are more likely to be lazy, violence prone, less intelligent and less patriotic. ...The most surprising revelation is the degree to which negative stereotypes of minorities cross color lines. Surveyors reported that roughly a third of blacks and Hispanics rated their group below whites in intelligence.

Is the media to blame for the continued stereotyping and negative self-fulfilling prophecy of minorities? Examination of the following examples tends to support a causal relationship.

A recent trend in ethnic and photocopy humor is JAP jokes or Jewish-American Princess jokes. At the heart of JAP jokes is the stereotype that Jewish women are rich, clothes horses and mall-hoppers. They are sexually repressed, ill-tempered and need high-maintenance. Most have had a nose-job and are a daddy's girls. Cindi Leive, a younger Jewish lady became leery of herself becoming the stereotype. "For a while, I dressed down, wore less makeup; I didn't believe in the stereotype, but I didn't much want to *be* it, either (1992)." She correlated the rise in anti-Semitic feelings to the popularity of JAP jokes. Further she states "...the JAP caricature actually shapes the way we see Jewish women, encouraging us to notice materialism on Long Island, but not in Kennebunkport; to hear "me first" whininess in a New York accent sooner than in a southern drawl (Leive, 1992)."

Leive has indeed pointed out the latent effects area of the media including photocopy humor. Viewers are unconscious and unaware of the shaping of their beliefs, values and attitudes through the viewing of photocopy humor. A great deal of vicarious or incidental learning occurs when viewing photocopy humor. Viewers learn how to relate to themselves (even enough to modify behavior, such as the example above), how to relate to people of the same race/gender and how to interact with the opposite sex, and/or individuals who are "different" in some way from themselves.

A different ethnic stereotype, Italian-American and "The Mafia" share commonalties with the JAP case scenario. Joseph Giordano, director of the American Jewish Committee's Center on Ethnicity, Behavior and Communication discussed the prevailing attitude about Italian Americans. The media has perpetuated stereotypes that Italian Americans are shady and part of the criminal element and have a Mafia connection. In surveying a group of psychotherapists he asked "...what they would like, dislike or fear in a relationship if they were to marry an Italian American. What they most feared was that their spouse would be prone to violence or 'connected' to crime in some way" (Giordano, 1987). To further illustrate the impact of viewing, thus strengthening the concept of "life imitates art" is the fact that media is supplying the real Mafia with a self-fulfilling stereotype. U.S. Attorney Rudolph Giuliani says there is a distinct difference in the wiretaps of Italian-American criminals before and after

The Godfather. Many, Giuliani says, began to sound like the characters in the film (Giordano, 1987).

Model-minority, scholastic overachievers, science-minded are all descriptors which have been used to describe Asian-American students. These stereotypes like the Mafia and JAP tend to be perpetuated by the media. Stereotyping has developed public attitudes of Asian-Americans as book-worm nerds and overachievers. Additionally, these stereotypes have served as a Locus of Control for many Asian-Americans driving them into and away from professions. David Shim scored a 1580 out of 1600 on his college boards but decided against a career in science. "'All my teachers were disappointed that I didn't go to M.I.T., ...but I really wanted to avoid the stereotype of the science geek'" (Allis, 1991).

The above examples support Massey's value programming model. What You Are is Where You Were When, when you were value programmed. The "how" of the equation would be the media, including photocopy humor. Based on the evidence above, viewing stereotypical material and roles which are presented in the media affect the way we view ourselves and the way we view others.

Content: General and Specific

Typically the content of photocopy humor is generally humorous in nature, serving as entertainment and/or as a social commentary. It is hypothesized that incidental learning and shaping is occurring, which would suggest that education is also occurring.

The collection of photocopy humor examined for this research was compiled from collections of several individuals who had kept many items in file folders for years as well as individual submissions. In one case, a person had been collecting photocopy humor items since 1974. This was a great find as a historical (yet biased) collection of examples.

As stated earlier, the entire collection examined included 355 items. Some items are duplicated in content, but differ in generation or heading. In examining these items, it was determined that there are two basic categories for which all belong. One is general or "generic" humor, while the second is much more specific in nature.

Most of the humor contained within the sampling is very general and broad in nature, that is, someone in California can appreciate the humor of the item just as much as someone in the rust belt. The subject matter is of the general type — something that has mass appeal. A good example would be many of the items dealing with a sexual topic (**Exhibit 1**). Generic humor can transcend the boundaries of one organization or geographic locale. The humor doesn't have to be based in the receivers' frame of reference to be funny. Receivers can relate to the item without it being specific in nature to the receiver's world.

Although a small percentage of the collection is specific in nature to include a reference to a particular firm or organization (the item uses the name of an actual firm) (**Exhibit 2**), or region of the country (town or state), the message of an item can usually carry itself without such a specific reference. The receivers may miss a portion of the intended message, but generally can relate the information to an area or firm in their frame of reference. For those in close proximity of the specific city or state, the item carries an additional message (right or

Exhibit 1

O.K., we took off our clothes—I get on top of you... How soon before it starts to feel good?
I don't know—but I've already got a headache!

Exhibit 2

This is your Brain:

CAT

This is your Brain on Drugs:

Exhibit 3

YES'M, AH QUIT DAT JOB. DAT WERE DE MOST RIDICULOUS PLACE I'S EVER BEEN IN!
DEY PLAYED A GAME CALLED BRIDGE, AN' LAS' NIGHT DERE WAS LOTS O' FELLAS AN' GALS DERE. ANS' AH AH WAS FIXIN' TO SERVE 'EM REFRESHMENTS AH HEARS DIS MAN SAY TO A WUMMIN, "DAS YO' HANDS ON MAH THICK!"
AH JES SLAH DRAPPED DAHD WHUT SEES MAH BOSSES, AH HEARS ANNUDDER MAN SAY, "YOU SURE GOT A NICE SHOT!"
DEN ANNUDDER MAN SAY, "LAY DOWN AN' LE'ME SEE WHUT YOU GOT!"
DEN AH HEARS DIS WOMAN SAY, "YOU FORCED ME AN' AH HAD TO TAKE YOU OUT WHEN AH'D ALREADY BEEN DOWN TWICE!"
DEN DIS UDDER WOMAN SAY "YOU JUMPED ME TWICE WHEN YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE STUFF EVAHY YO' ONE GOOD SUHSE."
'AN DEN, SOME WOMAN SAY SOMEP'S BOUT "COVERIN' HER HONORS."
WELL, AH JEST HIPS 'EM GITS MAH HAT 'CAUSE AH KNOWED DAT AIN'T NO FITTIN' PLACE FO' ME, AN' JAT'S AH WAS LEAVIN', AH HOPE TO DIE EF DIS WOMAN DIDN'T SAY, "WELL, AH GUESS WE'LL STOP NOW, AS DIS IS MAH LAS' RUBBER," AN' DEN — DOGGONE EF SHE DIDN'T SAY, "LAY DOWN YO DUMMY AN' LET ME PLAY ON IT!"
NO SAH'AH, AIN'T A LADY AN' AH JES' COULDN'T STAY THERE!

Exhibit 4

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wrongly). Those without a frame of reference for this particular city or state can find this humorous by substituting their own "city" into the equation and find the item humorous. The exception is **Exhibit 2**, of which many receivers may not "get" the humor. This example is a recently created item which reflects someone's thoughts about the labor problems at Caterpillar. More than likely, it was created during the strike period of 1992. It is clear that it was recently created by the use of Caterpillar's new logo. It could be a take-off on an old idea or theme and was re-created, recycled or updated. This is not uncommon as will be discussed later.

In most of these cases, specific content items were at some point general in nature and later adapted to the specific. Some items collected are the same content-wise with the only difference being one makes reference to a specific firm. This indicates the item was adapted by someone to include a reference to the specific, or an attempt to localize the humor. A good example of this is an "exam" which had a cover page stating it was an exam for political science department. The cover page was printed on official Bradley University stationery.

Another sample was found with the cover page changed to identify it as a Polish "IQ" test, but what followed was the same exam as the political science exam. Whether this change was an attempt to localize the humor or an effort to be sensitive to a nationality or a combination of both is unknown.

Noise/Filters

Noise is inherent in all forms of communication from intrapersonal to interpersonal to mass communication. Noise is an interference in the reception of the message which could take one of three forms: physical noise or real noise in the channel, psychological noise (including filters)—meaning and interpretation of the message differs from sender to receiver, and physiological noise which is noise that results from a bodily state. All three forms of noise would interfere with the fidelity of the message, however physical and psychological noise would be the dominant sources of noise concerning the reception of the message from photocopy humor.

The quality of the copy is an example of physical or real noise. As the quality of the copy lessens, noise is introduced into the channel. This noise is exponentially tied to quality. A very good, sharply printed clear item would have a very low noise level.

Generally speaking, photocopy humor varies in reproduction quality from very good to very poor. Many of the later generations of a copy show the quality loss (or physical noise) in drop out of words, copier tracks (lines and specks caused by foreign objects on the glass of the copier), lines caused by page edges, staple holes, improper settings on the copier (very dark or very light copies) and loss of a particular element of the whole document due to the limitations of either the machine on which the item was reproduced or the operator **(Exhibit 1)**.

It should be noted that several of the samples the author collected show a progression of sorts. Multiple copies of the same item have been collected and show that somewhere along the line, someone has received a poor quality copy and decided that the item deserves a "new" or "extended" life and has redrawn or retyped the item to the best of his/her ability. The redrafted item generally contains the es-

sence of the original, but more or less detail is added. This would be an example of correcting for noise (poor copy quality).

Psychological noise deals with how accurate the message is interpreted, how much of the message content and intent is hampered by the perceiver. Predisposition to a particular subject matter may influence interpretation. Interpretation of the iconography also figures into the equation as a form of noise.

Regulators & Gatekeepers

Regulators and gatekeepers are those individuals who have the power to control the flow of information. In traditional mass communication, the regulators and gatekeepers have the power to block or inhibit the message from reaching the audiences. Regulators typically are external to the communication organization: the government, public pressure groups, affiliation, etc. It was previously mentioned it would be next to impossible to regulate photocopy humor because of the informality of the network. Regulators could be office rules prohibiting the use of company technology or prevent posting, but is limited. Gatekeepers are those individuals who are a part of the medium. An example is the editor or television producer who can stop a story or idea from being disseminated. This person is internal, therefore a gatekeeper.

Traditional mass media gatekeepers and regulators wield a great deal of power and influence. Yet in photocopy humor this simply isn't the case. Gatekeepers can choose to pass a copy of photocopy humor on or to let the message die with them but they cannot stop the entire flow of information as the distribution network is too large. Even if several gatekeepers stop the flow of information, the chances are improbable that the message will end. The medium is too large and complex for that to happen. The worse case scenario is a portion of the audience will lose out on that specific message. Gatekeepers can alter or edit the message as they see fit.

Several items in the collection are the same with the exception of who was the focus of the humor. I have a "letter" a Polish mother wrote to her son which is identical to a Kentucky mother's letter as well as a Arkansas mother's letter. The same is true of items dealing with sports teams. In the redraft stage, someone decided to localize the humor, thus taking the general to the specific.

The content of the photocopy humor dictates with whom the item is shared and how it is distributed. By the very nature of photocopy humor, that is, humor which often appeals to the lowest common denominator, much of the subject matter draws upon stereotypes. It is unlikely that a person of one race will distribute to a person of a different race an item which pokes fun at that individual's race. Additionally, individuals of race may serve as gatekeepers and stop the flow of information or alter the content of an item which contains a reference to a race.

There are many other classifications that would limit the distribution, race is just one example. The participants involved in the communication narrow the scope of distribution based on the content of the item.

DISTRIBUTION

Distribution includes the technology used to transmit the message. The primary distribution technology used today is the plain paper copier. Facsimile machines do figure into the mix, but is still a minor part. Based on the collection gath-

ered, the distribution technologies have included handwritten, typed, carbon paper copies, mimeographed, computer and thermo copies. The first three items were all phraseology jokes, no visuals. The later three included visuals. The quality of the thermo copies was very poor to the point of being unreadable because they tend to fade over time.

Photocopiers

Photocopiers tend to be and will continue to remain the primary distribution technology for the following reasons. First, the price of the machine and cost per copy makes the technology attractive to use. Personal copiers can be purchased for under $500.00. The cost per copy is still only .05 - .10 cents a copy.

Second, photocopiers can be found virtually anywhere. In small town grocery and drug stores to large self-serve copy giants like Kinkos. The drop in price for a machine can be an attributing factor to the market penetration.

Third, many copier machines are located in areas which allow for self-operation. Users would not be intimidated by going through a service bureau to copy something that may be embarrassing or scrutinized. Again, price of the machine has attributed to this. Additionally, one doesn't need to rely on the copier at work to make their copies. However, this statement shouldn't be interpreted that people do not use office equipment, because they do.

Forth, because of the penetration, more individuals are familiar with the operation of the machine and the copiers have become more user-friendly as the technology improves. Thus more are apt to use a self-serve machine.

Facsimile

The use of a facsimile machine to transmit the message is just another step in the progression of the medium. The number of examples of photocopy humor increasingly has fax tracks on the edges. These fax tracks are the transmit terminal ID (TTI) printout which appears at the top of each page. TTI includes the name of the business, the business telephone and number of pages sent.

These fax tracks become a part of the message as it is photocopied and further distributed. A lineage, although limited, can be established. The fact that lineage can be proven and known by countless thousands might preclude the use of the fax machine as a distribution technology.

Currently many of the fax machines are located in places of business. Further, they are generally not available for self-serve, open access use by individuals. Many are within steps of a self-serve photocopier, however, fax machines do not enjoy such market penetration yet. Secretarial pools and/or support staff personnel are generally the individuals who send, receive and distribute faxes. This lack of free access limits the use (abuse?) of fax machines in distributing photocopy humor. Secretaries and such serve as an unknowing gatekeeper of information.

Given the above two examples: fax tracks and limited access to self-serve fax machines, the photocopier will continue to dominate as the primary distribution device until the market is saturated with fax machines which are readily available for individual self-serve use.

Computer Printers

Computer printers do play a part in distribution, but based on the collection, they only contribute slightly. The cost per copy off a laser, ribbon or ink jet printer prohibit large scale reproduction. Where computers and printers do figure into photocopy humor is in the updating or redrawing stage of the process. Individuals may "whip out" a fresh version off of the computer and printer, but use a photocopier for the volume copying.

The cost of a computer and printer would prohibit participation by some. The complexity of computer technology might also hamper the use by older or less educated individuals who haven't been exposed to technology.

Computer Bulletin Boards

Computer Bulletin Boards and on-line access provides yet another channel for distribution of similar material. I intentionally excluded bulletin boards from the study for the following reasons. One, the study is limited to include only those items of a "hard copy" nature (paper). Second, bulletin boards access is limited because of the specialized knowledge, necessity of equipment and on-line charges. On-line computer bulletin boards might exclude individuals of certain socio-economic and educational levels from participating because of the costs necessary for hardware, software and continued usage fees. By including an area which limits participation, this would skew the results and not accurately reflect what is.

CREATORS

One can't help but wonder who is responsible for the original creation of the piece which eventually becomes a well traveled example of photocopy humor. One could speculate that the makers of photocopy machines employ a staff of creative thinkers to generate new items, and thus create a need for the copier. Or perhaps it is the makers of the supplies for the copiers, or the paper industry.

In reality, not enough is known about the creators of this very specialized form of mass media. When considering mass media, we generally know, for example, when Twentieth Century Fox produces a movie or when ABC produces the evening news. The producers have good reason to claim ownership—as most of the mass media is distributed for a purpose, there is a motivation behind the production. Oftentimes that motivation is profit. This is not generally true of photocopy humor however. The creator or distributor is not normally identified.

The studied collection of photocopy humor does contain several samples which have a company name as the producer. It is unknown if the company is a originator or an adapter of an existing item. Many of the businesses are in the duplication business and they are using this mass medium for advertising purposes. It is uncertain in what business the others are engaged. Regardless of business, advertising appears to be the motive. If the message is cleaver enough that other's would want to make a copy, a modest investment in copies could parlay into a widely distributed message. This would be a pyramid approach to advertising. Make and distribute 100 copies. If the 100 copies cost .05, then the total cost would be 5.00. If each of those copies were copied by ten people that would be 1000 copies. And if each of the individuals who received a copy made ten copies, the total number would be 11,100 copies for the price of the 100 copies, or a CPM of .45 cents to the advertiser.

The downside to pyramid advertising would be the judgment of advertisement placement, the loss of control and the fidelity of the message. One could question the judgment of the business who would choose to advertise their business on a medium which carries controversial material (**Exhibit 3**). Additionally, as previously discussed, many individuals along the way can alter a portion of the message which still bears the name of a company. If the message wasn't controversial at the beginning, it might be changed.

Summary Assumption 1

It can be concluded by examining and placing elements of photocopy humor into the various categories of a mass medium model that photocopy humor is indeed a mass medium. The implications of the above research should dictate that more information is needed on the subject of photocopy humor. Inferences are drawn based on the visual and textual data presented. Based on previous experiences and closure of surrounding data, the message is decoded.

DISCUSSION OF ASSUMPTION 2

Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive learning theory postulates the idea that learning occurs in a social environment. Through "...observing others, people acquire, rules, skills, strategies, beliefs, and attitudes" (Schunk, 1991). Albert Bandura's work has been instrumental in formulating social cognitive theory. His research has established a framework for studying media effect and vicarious learning. Vicarious learning, he states, is responsible for much of human learning. Through the observation of models, either live, recorded or read we develop and acquire skills and behaviors upon which we can draw (Bandura, 1986).

It is important to examine the possible effects that vicarious learning has on consumers of photocopy humor. With the latent messages and stereotypes imbedded into the text, one can only assume that individuals will vicariously learn from the "hidden messages." As they encounter more and more, their value system will be modified. Humor serves as the reward, thus they will seek out additional items. Gradually a schema for relating to society is developed without much real thought by the individual. Quite vicariously, a value system has been established. This value system is going to be called upon as a social framework when encountering individuals who are different.

Williams, Zabrack and Joy developed a schema theory (1982) which builds off of Bandura's vicarious learning theory and ties directly into the idea of vicarious value system building. The schema theory is a model which accounts for how individuals build and modify information. Individuals add or modify their belief about social reality through observing others, television and direct experiences. This schema-based concept has also been used to explain the acquisition of stereotypes. We are socialized through media. This socialization process is what we draw upon when faced with similar events in our own lives.

In this world, most really do not want to be biased or prejudice. We recognize the detriment prejudice plays in society. Yet, when encountering a situation of involving individuals we have stereotyped, we recall those prior experiences and we draw upon our repertoire of responses, our value system and the stereotype is there—deeply rooted. Devine, et al. stated that "Overcoming a lifetime of socialization experiences that, unfortunately, promote prejudice is an arduous task" (Devine, 1989, 1991; Dovidio & Gaertner, in press; Ehrlich, 1973;

P.A. Katz, 1976). Individuals may "...renounce prejudice (or) may continue to experience prejudice-like thoughts or feelings" (Devine, p. 817). This coexistence of conflicting beliefs can lead to cognitive dissonance in the individual. The inner conflict of beliefs can lead to guilty feelings for thinking or reacting in a certain fashion. Many authors indicated feeling guilty after laughing at or finding ethnic humor funny. This conflict could possibly be the reasoning behind the guilt feelings. This inner conflict is the heart of Festinger's Cognitive Dissonance Theory. Simply stated, the more items a person knows that are inconsistent with the expressed behavior, the more dissonance the individual will feel. Thus when faced with humor which plays off the concept that blacks are lazy or JAP's are sexually repressed, we have a knowledge base which makes us realize these are not true attributes of that segment of the population. Yet, a separate part draws upon the ingrained value system, the prejudice and stereotypes and hence the conflict.

DISCUSSION OF ASSUMPTION 3

Cognitive Dissonance

As mentioned above, consumers of ethnic humor sometimes feel guilty for finding the item humorous, while others feel uncomfortable listening to ethnic or sexual humor. These feelings are reactions to the inner conflict in the value system they have developed. This uncomfortable feeling of conflict can vary in degrees of conflict. The more incongruent the values, the more dissonance one feels. The incongruency of values result in a drive to reduce the dissonance.

Festinger's theory provides a conceptual framework to examine the guilt feelings associated with viewing and finding the content of photocopy humor humorous.

Implications for Educational Practice

The ability to control exposure to mass media by children and young adults varies in success depending on the type of medium. It is very difficult to screen all stimulus inputs to which the youth are exposed. With this statement as a given, much effort is needed in the homes and in the schools to educate students to become critical viewers and consumers of media. Teaching critical viewing skills is slowly becoming integrated in classrooms. Unfortunately, critical viewing skills become yet another subject area in an already crowded arena of increased educational demands placed on the schools. And all too often such coursework is at the university level, much too late. Values and beliefs are well established and difficult to break. As educators and parents, we need to be proactive rather than reactive in examining the material that constantly bombards the populous.

Giordano also suggests a proactive approach. His suggestions deal with fighting the "Mafia" stereotype, but are applicable to all stereotypes. In summary, he suggests: 1. divert resources from battling stereotypes to promoting positive images, 2. challenge those who use negative ethnic stereotypes, 3. call for accurate portrayal in all mediums, 4. and finally, rise above the stereotype and serve as role models.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Simply stated there aren't answers to the questions raised. A great deal of research is indicated based on the possibility of negative effects. The research and data base so far points to the need for additional inquiry into photocopy humor.

Photocopy humor's message tends be visually oriented which accounts for the majority of meaning of the messages. Au-

diences are primed for visualness of the messages through years of socialization with the primary visual medium, television.

Additionally, surveys could be developed which would identify who the creators are and what purpose they intended when they created the photocopy humor item. The survey could also determine the demographic make-up of the audience members.

It is important to do further textual analysis to validate the preliminary findings as to specific content. A wider sampling is necessary. Care needs to be taken in not only the coding of the content (as mentioned earlier) but also in documenting the source of the sample for accurate and representative validity. The specific source is not important, but the occupation is. Photocopy humor transcends social-economic and racial classes. Samples from each class is necessary to accurately portray "what is".

SUMMARY

Thus far, the implications of some of the research indicate that education is the key to debunk myths and stereotypes which are common commodities in photocopy humor. This author recommends that teachers and parents need to 1. teach critical viewing skills, 2. turn attention to proactive measures rather than reactionary behaviors, 3. recognize the significance of seemingly trivial stimuli 4. and finally, teach tolerance.

No one source of value programming can bear the responsibility of perpetuating stereotypes. All the experiences one engages in and are exposed to has an impact on the development of beliefs, values and attitudes. Family, friends, schools, religion, media and so forth all share a part in the shaping of beliefs, values and attitudes. We need to become aware of the our own value programming and recognize the validity of our feelings. We can change our behaviors, but the process is slow and arduous.

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